

Schools needing to maximise progress

Case study school 5

School context

The school is a large two-form entry school in a predominantly owner occupied area close to a city centre. The school serves a diverse area with approximately 75% of the children from relatively affluent homes. The majority of the children are from a White British heritage (88%). Despite on-entry achievement being close to national expectations, standards at the end of Key Stage 2 were well below in 2004. The school needed to maximise progress across the whole school, but particularly at Key Stage 2.

Barriers to improvement

- High number of teaching staff carrying management points with little expectation of leadership of improvement.
- Low standards – Key Stage 2 mathematics at 60% and English at 69%
- Low staff morale – two staffrooms and split staff. Distanced management – ineffective management team.
- Teaching unsatisfactory and poorly led; expectations of achievement were low and teachers had poor subject knowledge.
- Limited tracking, monitoring, and ownership of standards (in teaching or learning).
- Special educational needs (SEN) support inappropriately focused – poor with no structure or guiding principles.
- Behaviour management unsatisfactory.

The school-based issues – what needed to change?

- Raise standards and improve progression, particularly at Key Stage 2.
- Improve middle leadership and its impact on teaching and learning.
- Improve continual professional development – linked to performance management and the School Improvement Plan.
- Set higher goals and expectations.
- Implement appropriate tracking and target setting.
- Improve SEN/inclusion provision and behaviour.

What was done?

- The school entered the Improving Schools Programme (ISP) for one year.
- Senior staff provided training in subject management, monitoring, lesson observations, 'walk through' and coaching.
- The leadership team was rebuilt – with real responsibility and expectations. The staff were consulted and the governors involved in making decisions about our structure. This is ongoing and the school is currently restructuring once again to help to layer management and to facilitate the reorganisation of the curriculum and consequential subject/standards responsibility. A standards team was introduced into our monitoring structure: each half-term they look at class and individual pupil data in relation to targets, then recommend intervention approaches to teachers.
- Improved impact of SEN provision through regular audit of provision (using school and LA skills) and developed through termly review meetings the accountability of the SEN coordinator as regards to value for money and pupil progress.
- Involved teaching assistants (TAs) in teaching and learning and improved TA status through training, recruitment, deployment and performance management.
- Strengthened monitoring and evaluation of the quality of teaching and learning across the school.
- Every class teacher was made accountable for the appropriate progress of every child including those who were identified as not making expected progress. Back on Track groups are identified at least termly.
- The school redefined expectations regarding behaviour and a behaviour plan was developed alongside the introduction of Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning – all after extensive consultation with staff and parents.
- Two learning mentors were employed.
- Introduction of *Every Child a Writer* from September 2009.

What has been the overall impact?

- The overall progress of pupils has improved significantly across Key Stage 2. In 2008 contextual value added was 101.2 and in 2009 100.6.
- Standards are above the national average for attainment at Key Stage 2.
- Standards are above the national average at level 2 and level 3 in reading, writing and mathematics at Key Stage 1.
- There are lower than average achievement gaps between pupils on free school meals (FSM) and their peers (non-FSM).
- Although the skills of leading teachers, advanced skills teachers and LA teacher advisers are still used, the school aims to deliver more in-house training and support using the skills of its own staff.
- The school has capacity to share good practice and support others, for example, through coaching. The deputy headteacher coaches other teachers as a leading literacy teacher and the headteacher provides support for leadership teams in the ISP programme. This brings to the school a broader perspective that enhances our understanding of what is possible and what we can be if we keep reviewing our practice. Many more of our staff are now confident to share their skills and to take a lead in collaborative events with other schools.

The full case study is available on the What Works Well website at www.whatworkswell.standards.dcsf.gov.uk. Please follow this link and then search for 'Leading on Improvement'.